

"We all support the troops and appreciate the sacrifices they and their families have made. But this debate is not about the bravery and valor of our men and women in uniform. It's about why we're in Iraq and where we need to go from here. Our troops don't need another congratulatory resolution, another 'job well done' speech - they need a plan, they need to know they're not going to be in Iraq forever, they need to know they'll be coming home soon.

"I believe success in Iraq is achievable. Iraqis need to know that we don't intend to occupy their country or establish permanent bases in Iraq. Our commitment cannot and should not be open-ended. I am not advocating a 'cut and run' policy, but I do advocate an exit plan, a plan like the one laid out by my colleague Rep. Jack Murtha. Rep. Murtha, a decorated Marine who served his country with distinction in Vietnam and originally supported this war, has laid out a plan calling for redeployment of our troops at the earliest practicable date, and for the US to pursue security and stability in Iraq through diplomatic means.

"Watching today's debate, I still see colleagues on the Floor rehashing excuses for why we got into Iraq. But we're three years in and more than 20,000 U.S. military personnel have been killed or wounded and the continuing chaos in Iraq today poses a greater threat to our security than prewar Iraq ever did. So, why aren't they on the Floor discussing an end to wasteful spending, to unnecessary loss of lives and building a stronger, safer America? We can't - the leadership of Congress has stopped listening. They made up their minds and stubbornly insist 'staying the course' is the only option.

"Winning in Iraq, or any conflict, depends on a successful transition once major warfare ends. But the Administration's reconstruction efforts in Iraq have been as flawed as its military strategy. Instead of building the ability of Iraqis to run their own country, a quarter of the \$24 billion of American taxpayer's money marked for reconstruction projects has been spent on security and inflated contracts to U.S. companies. Unlike in other wars, we've outsourced security, not to Iraqis, but to some 20,000 to 30,000 non-Iraqi civilians who have no contractual or financial incentive to build local Iraqi capacity.

"We can win in Iraq, but only with the Iraqis taking control of their government and security, and by following a well-thought out plan like Rep Murtha's."